

**SIUe**

**Successful  
Communities  
Collaborative**



**ENCHANTING ALTON**

**Marketing Strategies for Attracting Growth**

Spring 2019 • MKTG 525 • Marketing Analysis and Applications

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School of Business • Marketing

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**SIUE**

Successful  
Communities  
Collaborative



SIUE Successful Communities Collaborative Year 2018-2019

In Partnership with

City of Alton, Illinois

[www.siu.edu/sscc](http://www.siu.edu/sscc)

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## Acknowledgements

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We give special acknowledgement to the following individuals for their contributions:

- [Brant T. Walker, Mayor of the City of Alton](#)
- [Greg Caffey, Director of Planning and Development](#)

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## **About Office of Educational Outreach**

The [Office of Educational Outreach](#) enriches the economic, cultural, personal and professional lives of a diverse society, eliminating barriers to expand the educational resources of SIUE. We promote learning by providing accessible educational opportunities through the agile development of relevant, collaborative programs and partnerships.

The Office of Educational Outreach provides a broad array of services in support of academic units, community partners and all learners.

Besides professional and personal development courses offered both on-campus and online, the Office of Educational Outreach provides:

- Workshops for licensed professionals
- A Lifelong Learning speaker series
- Exam preparation courses
- Opportunity to join in our campus-based credit courses through the Educard program
- Conference and event scheduling
- Exam proctoring services
- Video conference event scheduling
- Support for corporate partnerships
- Support for the SIUE Successful Community Collaborative
- Support and registration for SIUE summer camps

Please explore our pages to learn more about how we extend the reach of SIUE by serving the broader community with continuing education, workforce training, personal development courses and much more.

### **Office of Educational Outreach**

Enriching. Empowering. Engaging. Education for All.

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## **About SSCC**

SIUE Successful Communities Collaborative (SSCC) is a cross-disciplinary program that supports partnerships between the University and communities in Illinois to advance local resiliency and sustainability based on community-identified environmental, social, and economic issues and needs. Our mission is to connect communities with the students and faculty of SIUE.

SSCC offers communities innovative strategies to move high-priority sustainability goals forward. Communities often face limited resources to explore sustainability and quality of life questions. SSCC seeks to reduce those obstacles by linking existing graduate and undergraduate courses at SIUE to explore innovative solutions to community-identified projects. SSCC staff work closely with faculty to incorporate community projects into their courses and connect students with community partners. Staff and stakeholders from the community work closely with SIUE faculty and students to provide local knowledge and deeper understanding into the issues, guaranteeing projects are not only innovative, but also suitable to the community.

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## About the City of Alton

The [City of Alton](#) is located in [Madison County, Illinois](#) at the [confluence](#) of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. With a current population of about 28,000, Alton was founded in 1837 and has a rich history in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Alton is the birthplace of [Miles Davis](#), the iconic jazz musician, and [Robert Wadlow](#), the tallest man in recorded history. In addition, Alton was the location of the Abolitionist press owned by [Elijah Lovejoy](#) for whom [SIUE's campus library](#) is named. As a Union stronghold on the Mississippi river, Alton formerly housed Confederate prisoners in a [penitentiary](#) whose ruins are on the U.S. Register of National Historic Places.



In modern Alton, residents enjoy affordable and eclectic housing, with many lovely nineteenth-century homes occupied continuously since their construction. Both residents and

visitors can access a variety of entertainment and educational venues. The riverfront is the home of the [Argosy Casino](#), and within walking distance one can find a variety of [restaurants](#) in the downtown area. Alton's scenic riverfront is home to the [Liberty Bank Amphitheater](#) for outdoor enjoyment of live music during warm months. History and nature enthusiasts can explore the [Melvin Price Lock and Dam](#), [eagle-watch](#) during Alton's mid-winter migration season, and visit the site that [Lewis and Clark launched the Corps of Discovery](#) in nearby Hartford, Illinois. This charming river city is a short thirty-minute drive from St. Louis, Missouri and the employment, entertainment, and cultural offerings of a major Midwestern hub.

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## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to gather data about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to commercial and residential growth in Alton, Illinois and to make informed recommendations for marketing the City of Alton.

The City of Alton's positive aspects are numerous. The city's low cost of living is attractive to young adults and older individuals who seek variety in dining, entertainment, and locally-owned shopping opportunities. Both of these demographics have access to three centers for higher education and personal enrichment within twenty minutes of downtown. Business professionals benefit from Alton's proximity to St. Louis, Missouri and may use Alton as a bedroom community with a short commute, or may take advantage of local, affordable existing commercial structures. Alton's natural position on the bluffs of the Mississippi river also attracts eco-tourists who can enjoy annual bald eagle migrations in winter, and many branches of scenic bicycle trails that connect Alton to the greater metro region. Our analysis of the city finds these strengths enticing to future residents and businesses. Marketing strategies, however, must acknowledge that the city's historic nature includes aging infrastructure and a metro-area perception of a higher crime rate than in other St. Louis metropolitan Illinois communities. The key to marketing the City of Alton will be to maintain a steady stream of media and messages to residents and prospective residents to keep the city's strengths in the forefront of the public's mind.

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## Marketing for Alton

### Target Audiences

#### Primary Target: Millennials (22-37 years of age)

The primary target for the City of Alton is the millennial generation, those individuals aged 22 to 37 in the year 2019. Young families will be attracted by 7 public elementary [schools](#) that concentrate into a unified public middle school. Alton's public



high school was renovated in 2007 at a cost of \$57 million dollars. [Lewis and Clark Community College](#), [Principia College](#), and [Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville](#) are within 20 minutes of the city and provide access to continuing and higher education for its residents. Alton has an array of employment opportunities that are attractive to Millennials. Major employers include [Alton Memorial Hospital](#), [Alton Steel](#), [Argosy Casino](#), [Lewis and Clark Community College](#), [Olin Brass](#), and [American Water Resources](#). The city also boasts a location near St. Louis, Missouri, and Granite City, Illinois for additional entry-level professional, manufacturing and industrial occupations.

Housing costs in Alton are lower than similar-sized cities in the region. The median housing cost in Alton is \$80,400, compared to Edwardsville at \$202,500, and St. Louis at \$123,800. This lower cost of housing appeals to younger individuals and families who desire the big city experience without big city prices.

In addition, AltonWorks, citizen-sponsored revitalization plan has launched that will create pedestrian-friendly landscapes and emphasize Alton's scenic urban views of the Mississippi with rooftop development in the downtown area. [AltonWorks](#) headquarters, located at 601 East Broadway, houses a team of developers focused on achieving a more beautiful, walking-friendly, and enticing downtown landscape.

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## Secondary Target: Business Professionals



The secondary target focuses on business professionals. Alton is a desirable location for small business owners and entrepreneurs due to its location near St. Louis, Missouri and its convenient proximity to Lambert

St. Louis International Airport. The City of Alton was chosen for the [Small Business Revolution](#) television show that helped to revamp six locally-owned businesses; these included a soul food restaurant, an Irish pub, an outdoor supply store, a beauty supply store, a recording studio, and a dog grooming salon. Alton also supports [Tax Increment Financing](#) Districts in the Riverfront and Hunterstown neighborhoods to encourage small businesses to open by alleviating some of the tax burden associated with a new business start-up. Alton's visitor traffic also makes it an ideal location for [unique shops, services, and restaurants](#) that catch the consumer's eye.

## Tertiary Target A: Eco-Tourists

Eco-tourists are a tertiary target of marketing for Alton. Eco-tourism highlights the natural, diverse, and dynamic landscapes of the area. Alton and surrounding areas are home to the [second-largest bald eagle winter habitat](#) in the United States. The City also serves bird-watchers year-round in its position within the country's largest flyway for



Southern migration. The [Great River Road](#) spans 3,500 miles between the headwaters of the Mississippi River to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico. Natural limestone bluffs line the eastern edge of this magnificent drive in Alton, and the road travels directly through downtown. By targeting people that are attracted to natural geographic features, flora, and fauna, the city could boost its population in turn increasing the revenue generated in the city.

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### Tertiary Target B: Baby Boomers (52 to 70 years of age)



Baby Boomers are another tertiary market that Alton would serve well. The population of 55- to 64-year-olds in the Jersey-Macoupin-Madison County region is just over 48,000, and is the largest age group in the Alton area. According to [SmartAsset.com](https://www.smartasset.com), which analyzes U.S. Census Bureau data, the average retirement age in the

state of Illinois in 2016 was 63. Alton has been highlighted in national publications as a desirable retirement destination: [Forbes “Top 100” Places to Retire](#), and [AARP’s 10 Best Places to Live for Under \\$40,000 a Year](#). While this target group is high in population, upon retirement, income may drop as many seniors move to fixed retirement income sources. Baby Boomers would benefit from a small, quiet community like Alton with affordable living, local activities to enjoy, and easy access to healthcare through [Alton Memorial Hospital](#), [St. Anthony’s Health Center](#), and [St. Clare’s Hospital](#). The City of Alton already aims to provide entertainment and nature-centric activities that are attractive to this age group; but more can be done to expand upon that. Furthermore, this target group may gain disposable income despite fixed retirement income due to lack of childcare and commuting expenses associated with participation in the workforce. Alton provides opportunities for [dining](#), [shopping](#), and [a variety of entertainment](#) for Baby Boomers.



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## SWOT Analysis

### STRENGTHS

- Location in close proximity to St. Louis, Missouri and three colleges/universities
- Low cost of living compared to area cities of similar population
- Rich in history
- External attention— [Small Business Revolution, Season 3](#); [Forbes “Top 100” Places to Retire](#); and [AARP’s 10 Best Places to Live for Under \\$40,000 a Year](#)

### WEAKNESSES

- Run-down appearance of some older residential and commercial structures
- Limited access to walking/hiking/biking trails
- Outdated city infrastructure

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Diverse and visually spectacular natural landscapes
- Entertainment venues in public and commercial spaces
- Growing social and cultural diversity
- Ongoing exposure through external outlets and advertising

### THREATS

- Proximity to Edwardsville and its commercial growth and entertainment attractions
- Drive through to Grafton and its entertainment attractions without incentive to visit Alton
- Perceived local crime rate in comparison to nearby cities of similar size

Alton is located in the St. Louis Metro region with easy access to other cities, a quality that benefits residents and increases visitors to the City of Alton. These nearby cities also pose a threat to the City of Alton by having newer infrastructure, more retail growth, and greater public awareness of entertainment venues. Public perception of a higher crime rate than that of Edwardsville, for example, is another threat to Alton. Areas of ecological and geosocial interest exist within the city; however, many are difficult to get to without motorized transportation.

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## Situational Analysis

The marketplace in which Alton competes consists of user, buyer, competition, market share, distribution structure, and environmental factors.

USERS: The users of Alton are the visitors who currently take advantage of the city's business, entertainment, and educational opportunities. A marketing goal for Alton is to allow users to evolve into buyers.

BUYERS: Buyers for Alton include residents and visitors who buy products, services, and real estate in the city. We believe the primary buyers would be young adults and business professionals. Real estate ownership ensures tax revenue for the city and a locally invested residential population.

MARKET SHARE: The market share of Alton is based on the population size compared to surrounding cities. The population of Alton is 26,528. The population of Edwardsville is slightly lower with 24,969. St. Louis has a population of 302,838.

COMPETITION: The City of Alton's closest marketplace competitor is Edwardsville. Despite Alton's slightly larger population, Edwardsville continuously grows and develops, adding jobs and high-quality housing to the market. Alton competes well, but the city must work to add employment opportunities and attractive housing to improve its desirability.

DISTRIBUTION STRUCTURE: Alton's distribution structure exists in experiences of its visitors. Increasing regional awareness of the city's amenities through advertising and promotion will increase the rate of out-of-city attendance of cultural events, increase numbers of visitors partaking of Alton's many restaurants and entertainment venues, and flaunt the architectural and natural diversity of the city.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS: The City of Alton is unique in the region, and the best way to appreciate its offerings is to visit.

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## Communication Objectives

- Increase awareness for events taking place within Alton
  - Promote concerts, youth sports, outdoor recreation, historical tours
- Increase tourism to Alton
  - Provide and publicize a greater number of monthly public events
- Increase population
  - Entice tourists to make Alton their permanent residence through exposure to its strengths
- Increase new business development
  - Educate potential entrepreneurs about the benefits of Alton's low cost-of-operation and the buying power of its residents and visitors
- Focus on rebranding the city and telling the story of the city
  - Tell the stories of the people who live in and love the city, from its historic founding as a river port to the vibrant cultural collage that exists today

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## Communication Strategy

### Advertising Strategy

- M-Mission
  - Convince small business owners and young professionals that Alton is a great place to start a business or a family by using informative advertising.
- M-Money
  - Evaluate the life-cycle of the community and the desired advertising frequency to determine a marketing budget.
- M-Message
  - Highlight the business districts, community activities, and low cost of living.
- M-Media
  - Purchase advertising on local television, print publications, radio stations, and social media platforms to reach every target demographic.
- M-Measurement
  - Use analytics provided by media platforms to assess the degree to which target demographics are being reached.



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## Personal Selling Strategy

A city is a product made of many components. Our marketing research suggests that addressing the city as a complete experience of living, working, and playing will best frame Alton as a highly desirable environment. By addressing the city as an aggregate, ideas and strategies of sales and marketing apply. Every environment is a product of physical spaces and emotional reactions. Our advertisements could pose questions to consumers that make them practically and emotionally assess their current living situations and why they feel that way, while prompting them to look at the product, “Alton”. When prospective residents appraise their current residential environments, enthusiastic champions of Alton can prompt comparisons in value from an informed position. Educating individuals who have contact with potential residents on a frequent basis, such as realtors, hotel concierge staff, and business owners will support proposed advertising strategies in line with Alton’s “brand”. These interactions may be a first-contact experience for potential new residents or may provide reinforcement for marketing techniques already in place. The opportunities for selling the benefits of Alton are thus exponentially multiplied.

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## Schedule of Activities

Throughout the year, social media posts about upcoming events should be made on various platforms, and local businesses should be provided with flyers to display. Online advertisements for city-sponsored events should be purchased when funds are available. Flyers or mailers should also go out for city-sponsored events. Advertising for upcoming events should be done at current events.



<p><b>First Quarter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish Citizen of the Month program</li> <li>• Ads about eagle-watching</li> <li>• Ads about HS basketball</li> <li>• Ads for Valentine’s Day date packages with restaurant and overnight stay options</li> </ul>	<p><b>Second Quarter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Riverfront Concert Series</a>*</li> <li>• Ads for outdoor recreation</li> <li>• <a href="#">Instagram takeovers</a></li> <li>• Highlight unique shopping districts</li> <li>• Green Thumb nominations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Third Quarter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Riverfront Concert Series</a>*</li> <li>• Ads for outdoor recreation</li> <li>• <a href="#">4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks</a>*</li> <li>• <a href="#">Battle of the Beers</a>*</li> <li>• <a href="#">Hauntings History Walking Tour</a>*</li> <li>• Green Thumb awards</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fourth Quarter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote self-guided fall foliage tours</li> <li>• <a href="#">St. Mary’s Oktoberfest</a>*</li> <li>• <a href="#">Halloween parade</a>*</li> <li>• <a href="#">Taste of Alton</a>*</li> <li>• <a href="#">Winter Wonderland</a>*</li> <li>• Highlight holiday shopping</li> </ul>

\*City is currently doing these activities.

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## Conclusion and Next Steps

To promote the City of Alton, a multi-system marketing strategy that reaches prospective residents and business owners of all age levels will be most effective. The city's diverse offerings appeal to individuals of all ages and socioeconomic standings, with reasonable cost-of-living, multiple opportunities for employment and education, and dynamic cultural activities. Its unique location at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, and the resulting natural bluffs with their scenic vistas invite people to visit. Our mission is to convince them to make Alton "home", or at least a home away from home.

The marketing strategies proposed in this report can be enacted at both a grassroots level and a civic level. Posting flyers and hosting shopping open houses costs very little and also establishes the idea of promotion of Alton in current residents and visitors. We propose that this sharing of information will snowball and become the foundation for higher visitor traffic and greater revenue for Alton and its businesses.

Ultimately, the City of Alton sells itself. The charm of this river port is undeniable; if you "build" an image of Alton as a fun, diverse, and dynamic modern city in a beautiful historic setting, visitors will surely come to stay and become a part of the colorful fabric of Alton, Illinois.